

Pandemic H1N1 Advice for Students

This document provides AIT students with general guidance on dealing with Pandemic H1N1:

- Don't panic, for the vast majority of people this is a mild illness.
- If you suspect you have this flu do not come to AIT for any reason.
- Call the HSE Flu Information Line free phone number 1800 94 11 00.
- Ring your GP for further advice in particular if you are in a high risk group. Do not attend the surgery without ringing your GP first.
- Inform your academic department office as soon as possible regarding your condition.
- If you are living away from home arrangements should be made for you to return home. If this is not possible identify a group of flu buddies for yourself and your friends. If one of you should fall ill these flu buddies should be able to take care of you. Information on caring for a sick person can be obtained by calling the 24 hour HSE Flu information Line free phone 1800 94 11 00

What is Pandemic H1N1?

Pandemic H1N1 is a type of flu virus, which can spread easily from person to person. It is called a pandemic flu because people all over the world are being infected by it.

Most people infected with this virus have a mild to moderate illness, but some have more severe illness, in particular those in high risk groups or with underlying medical conditions.

What are the Symptoms of Pandemic H1N1?

Having the symptoms listed below does not always mean that you have this flu. Many different illnesses cause similar symptoms. The symptoms are like those of normal seasonal flu and include: fever that begins very suddenly, severe fatigue, a cough, a sore throat, a runny nose, headache and muscle aches. Some people have vomiting and diarrhoea. Most individuals recover from this virus without the use of anti-viral drugs or the need for hospitalisation. While it is usually a mild disease some people may develop complications such as pneumonia.

What are the differences between Pandemic H1N1 and the common cold?

Some people mistake a common cold for influenza/flu. Symptoms of influenza come on rapidly and are typically accompanied by muscle aches and a fever. The common cold has a more gradual onset and is associated with a runny nose and sneezing.

The table below may be useful in distinguishing between the two.

Symptoms	Pandemic H1N1	Common Cold
Onset	Sudden	Slow
Fever	Characteristically High ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 100°F)	Rare
Headache	Prominent	Rare
General aches and pains	Usual, often severe	Rare
Fatigue, weakness	Can be prolonged for a number of weeks	Quite mild

Extreme exhaustion	Early and prominent	Never
Runny Nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Usual
Sore Throat	Common	Common
Cough	Common, can be severe	Mild to moderate hacking cough
Diarrhoea, vomiting	Sometimes	Not associated with the common cold in adults

What is the course of Pandemic H1N1?

It appears that after a person becomes infected, it takes less than two days for symptoms to start and this is when people are most infectious. After the onset of symptoms, the illness is contagious for a further 5 days. For this reason you should stay away from AIT for 7 days from the onset of symptoms.

How does Pandemic H1N1 spread?

Flu virus spreads from person to person mainly through the coughing or sneezing of a sick person. Flu virus may also be spread when a person touches something (for example a tissue or door handle touched by the infected person) that is contaminated with the virus and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. This virus is not transmitted by eating pork or pork products.

How can you help to stop the spread of Pandemic H1N1?

Stay healthy: stop the spread of infection by:

- Avoiding close contact with people who appear unwell and have fever and cough.
- Always carrying tissues.
- Covering your nose and mouth with disposable tissues when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing your nose.
- Always disposing of used tissues into a bin immediately.
- Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand cleaners regularly.
- Cleaning surfaces regularly to get rid of germs. It is important to ensure that all household surfaces that are touched by hands are kept clean, especially bedside tables, surfaces in bathrooms and kitchens. Such surfaces should be wiped regularly with a household disinfectant.
- If you are sharing accommodation with an infected person try where possible to minimise contact with the infected person e.g. prepare and eat meals separately and avoid sharing bedrooms during the 7 day period.
- Do not travel or come to college for any reason if you are showing any influenza symptoms.

What is the treatment of Pandemic H1N1?

- As per the current HSE guidelines it is anticipated that most people with this flu will not require antiviral medications. If you are ill or you think you might be ill follow the HSE guidelines: Phone the HSE Flu Information Line free phone 1800 94 11 00.
- Phone your GP for advice.
- Stay at home for 7 days – avoid spreading infection to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, and especially after coughing and sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Take simple anti-fever medication such as paracetamol or aspirin and drink plenty of fluids.

- Avoid smoking.
- Discourage visitors.

Who are those considered to be in a high risk group and will need treatment?

People who are in high risk groups will need immediate treatment upon development of symptoms. These include people who have: chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease; people whose immune system is reduced by disease or medications; people with diabetes mellitus; people aged 65 years and older; children under 5 (children under 2 are at particular risk of influenza); people on medication for asthma, severely obese people (body mass index more than 40) and pregnant women.

If you or a close family member are in one of these high risk groups and you suspect that you have influenza or have been in close contact with someone you suspect has influenza then contact your GP by telephone immediately.

How will you know that you need medical care?

If you have taken the basic care steps outlined above and you start to feel worse, or if after a few days you are not feeling better, you may need further advice from your doctor. Contact your doctor by phone or the Flu Information Line free phone 1800 94 11 00 if you notice:

- Shortness of breath at rest or while doing very little.
- Painful or difficult breathing.
- Coughing up bloody sputum.
- Drowsiness, disorientation or confusion.
- Fever for 4-5 days and not starting to get better (or getting worse).
- Starting to feel better then developing high fever and feeling unwell again.

What should you do if you develop symptoms?

If you develop influenza symptoms do not come to college, stay at home, phone the HSE Information Line freephone 1800 94 11 00 or call your GP. Do not visit your GP surgery unannounced.

If you are living away from home arrangements should be made for you to return home. If this is not possible identify a group of 'flu buddies' for yourself and your friends. If one of you should fall ill these flu buddies should be able to take care of you. Information on caring for a sick person can be obtained by calling the 24 hour HSE Flu Information Line free phone 1800 94 11 00.

Inform your academic department as soon as possible regarding your condition.

Department	Number
Business School	090 642 4607
School of Humanities	090 647 1896
Civil, Construction & Mineral Engineering	090 642 4602
Electronics, Computer & Software Engineering Mechanic & Plastics/Polymer Engineering	090 6424612
Life & Physical Science	090 643 8144
Nursing & Health Science	090 647 1836
International Students	090 642 4572

What should you do if you are in contact with a person who has Pandemic H1N1?

Do not panic, go about your normal activities unless you start to develop symptoms. If you are in a high risk group contact your GP for advice.

Who will receive anti-viral treatment?

As most cases of Pandemic H1N1 will be mild, anti-viral treatment will only be necessary in a small proportion of cases. Doctors will assess each case but the following groups are the ones most likely to require treatment with anti-virals:

- Patients who appear to have severe symptoms.
- Patients who are in defined high risk groups.
- Should a GP prescribe anti-viral treatment the prescription can be filled at any pharmacy. Anti-viral medicines for this flu are free of charge to all.

Is there a vaccine against Pandemic H1N1?

Vaccine companies are manufacturing a vaccine for Pandemic H1N1. The HSE will provide the vaccine as soon as sufficient amount of vaccines are available. No date has yet been confirmed for the delivery or distribution of this vaccine.

If you have recently returned from travel abroad, should you come to college?

Yes, as long as you are well and not suffering from flu-like symptoms, there is no reason for you to stay away from AIT and you can carry on with your normal routine. You should, however, be vigilant for the symptoms of this flu and, at the first signs of these, should stay at home and call the HSE Flu Information Line free phone 1800 94 11 00. If concerned, or you are in a high risk group you should contact your GP by phone.

Is there a requirement at present for AIT to close?

No, AIT is open as normal. You should come to college unless you have any symptoms of this flu. It is expected that AIT will remain open even if there are some students/staff out sick with Pandemic H1N1. However in certain circumstances AIT may be advised to close. This decision will be made in the light of expert advice from the local public health officials. Please continue to attend college unless you are advised otherwise.

Will examinations take place as normal?

Examinations shall take place as currently scheduled.

Can you go on placement?

Placements will continue as arranged. If you are on placement and develop symptoms of this flu please follow the guidelines as outlined and ensure that you contact both your placement provider and your academic department.

Further information:

Health Protection Surveillance Centre: www.hpsc.ie

Health Service Executive: www.hse.ie